

SALT  
WATER  
BALLADS

MASEFIELD



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**SALT-WATER BALLADS**



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TORONTO



SALT-WATER  
BALLADS

BY  
JOHN MASEFIELD

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Some of this book was written in my boyhood,  
all of it in my youth; it is now re-issued, much  
as it was when first published nearly eleven  
years ago.

J. M.

*9th June 1913*





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'The mariners are a pleasant people, but little like those in the towns, and they can speak no other language than that used in ships.'

*The Licenciate Vidriera.*

## A CONSECRATION

*NOT of the princes and prelates with periwigged  
charioteers*

*! Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the  
years,—*

*Rather the scorned—the rejected—the men hemmed  
in with the spears;*

*The men of the tattered battalion which fights till  
it dies,*

*Dazed with the dust of the battle, the din and the  
cries,*

*The men with the broken heads and the blood run-  
ing into their eyes.*

*Not the be-medalled Commander, beloved of the  
throne,*

*Riding cock-horse to parade when the bugles are  
blown,*

*But the lads who carried the koppie and cannot be  
known.*

*Not the ruler for me, but the ranker, the tramp of  
the road,*

*The slave with the sack on his shoulders pricked on  
with the goad,*

*The man with too weighty a burden, too weary a  
load.*

*The sailor, the stoker of steamers, the man with the  
clout,*

*The chantyman bent at the halliards putting a tune  
to the shout,*

*The drowsy man at the wheel and the tired look-  
out.*

*Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the  
mirth,*

*The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth;—  
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of  
the earth!*

*THEIRS be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold;  
Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.*

*Of the maimed, of the halt and the blind in the rain  
and the cold—*

*Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales be  
told.*

AMEN.



THE YARN OF THE 'LOCH ACHRAY'

THE 'Loch Achray' was a clipper tall  
With seven-and-twenty hands in all.  
Twenty to hand and reef and haul,  
A skipper to sail and mates to bawl  
'Tally on to the tackle-fall,  
Heave now 'n' start her, heave 'n' pawl!  
    Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
    An old yarn learned at sea.

Her crew were shipped and they said 'Farewell,  
So-long, my Tottie, my lovely gell;  
We sail to-day if we fetch to hell,  
It's time we tackled the wheel a spell.'  
    Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
    An old yarn learned at sea.

The dockside loafers talked on the quay  
The day that she towed down to sea:

'Lord, what a handsome ship she be!  
Cheer her, sonny boys, three times three!  
And the dockside loafers gave her a shout  
As the red-funnelled tug-boat towed her out;  
They gave her a cheer as the custom is,  
And the crew yelled 'Take our loves to Liz—  
Three cheers, bullies, for old Pier Head  
'N' the bloody stay-at-homes!' they said.

Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.

In the grey of the coming on of night  
She dropped the tug at the Tuskar Light,  
'N' the topsails went to the topmast head  
To a chorus that fairly awoke the dead.  
She trimmed her yards and slanted South  
With her royals set and a bone in her mouth.

Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.

She crossed the Line and all went well,  
They ate, they slept, and they struck the bell

THE YARN OF THE 'LOCH ACHRAY' 5

And I give you a gospel truth when I state  
The crowd didn't find any fault with the Mate,  
But one night off the River Plate.

Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.

It freshened up till it blew like thunder  
And burrowed her deep, lee-scuppers under.  
The old man said, 'I mean to hang on  
Till her canvas busts or her sticks are gone'—  
Which the blushing looney did, till at last  
Overboard went her mizzen-mast.

Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.

Then a fierce squall struck the 'Loch Achray'  
And bowed her down to her water-way;  
Her main-shrouds gave and her forestay,  
And a green sea carried her wheel away;  
Ere the watch below had time to dress  
She was cluttered up in a blushing mess.

Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.



She couldn't lay-to nor yet pay-off,  
 And she got swept clean in the bloody trough;  
 Her masts were gone, and afore you knowed  
 She filled by the head and down she goed.  
 Her crew made seven-and-twenty dishes  
 For the big jack-sharks and the little fishes,  
 And over their bones the water swishes.

Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
 An old yarn learned at sea.

The wives and girls they watch in the rain  
 For a ship as won't come home again.  
 'I reckon it's them head-winds,' they say,  
 'She'll be home to-morrow, if not to-day.  
 I'll just nip home 'n' I'll air the sheets  
 'N' buy the fixins 'n' cook the meats  
 As my man likes 'n' as my man eats.'

So home they goes by the windy streets,  
 Thinking their men are homeward bound  
 With anchors hungry for English ground,  
 And the bloody fun of it is, they're drowned!

Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
 An old yarn learned at sea.

SING A SONG O' SHIPWRECK

HE lolled on a bollard, a sun-burned son of the sea,  
With ear-rings of brass and a jumper of dungaree,  
' 'N' many a queer lash-up have I seen,' says he.

'But the toughest hooray o' the racket,' he says, 'I'll  
be sworn,  
'N' the roughest traverse I worked since the day I  
was born,  
Was a packet o' Sailor's Delight as I scoffed in the  
seas o' the Horn.

'All day long in the calm she had rolled to the  
swell,  
Rolling through fifty degrees till she clattered her  
bell;  
'N' then came snow, 'n' a squall, 'n' a wind was  
colder 'n hell.

'It blew like the Bull of Barney, a beast of a  
breeze,  
'N' over the rail come the cold green lollopin' seas,  
'N' she went ashore at the dawn on the Ramirez.

'She was settlin' down by the stern when I got to  
the deck,  
Her waist was a smother o' sea as was up to your  
neck,  
'N' her masts were gone, 'n' her rails, 'n' she was  
a wreck.

'We rigged up a tackle, a purchase, a sort of a shift,  
To hoist the boats off o' the deck-house and get  
them adrift,  
When her stern gives a sickenin' settle, her bows  
give a lift,

'N' comes a crash of green water as sets me  
afloat  
With freezing fingers clutching the keel of a boat—  
The bottom-up whaler—'n' that was the juice of a  
note.



'Well, I clammers acrost o' the keel 'n' I gets me  
 secured,  
 When I sees a face in the white o' the smother to  
 looard,  
 So I gives 'im a 'and, 'n' be shot if it wasn't the  
 stooard!

'So he climbs up forrard o' me, 'n' "thanky," a' says,  
 'N' we sits 'n' shivers 'n' freeze to the bone wi' the  
 sprays,  
 'N' *I* sings "Abel Brown," 'n' the stooard he prays.

'Wi' never a dollop to sup nor a morsel to bite,  
 The lips of us blue with the cold 'n' the heads of  
 us light,  
 Adrift in a Cape Horn sea for a day 'n' a night.

'N' then the stooard goes dotty 'n' puts a tune to  
 his lip,  
 'N' moans about Love like a dern old hen wi' the  
 pip—  
 (I sets no store upon stooards—they ain't no use  
 on a ship).

'N' "mother," the looney cackles, "come 'n' put  
Willy to bed!"

So I says "Dry up, or I'll fetch you a crack o' the  
head";

"The kettle's a-bilin'," he answers, "'n' I'll go but-  
ter the bread."

'N' he falls to singin' some slush about clinkin' a  
can,

'N' at last he dies, so he does, 'n' I tells you, Jan,  
I was glad when he did, for he weren't no fun for  
a man.

'So he falls forrard, he does, 'n' he closes his eye,  
'N' quiet he lays 'n' quiet I leaves him lie,  
'N' I was alone with his corp, 'n' the cold green  
sea and the sky.

'N' then I dithers, I guess, for the next as I knew  
Was the voice of a mate as was sayin' to one of the  
crew,

"Easy, my son, wi' the brandy, be shot if he ain't  
comin'-to!"

## BURIAL PARTY

'HE's deader 'n nails,' the fo'c's'le said, ' 'n' gone  
to his long sleep';

' 'N' about his corp,' said Tom to Dan, 'd'ye think  
his corp'll keep

Till the day's done, 'n' the work's through, 'n' the  
ebb's upon the neap?'

'He's deader 'n nails,' said Dan to Tom, ' 'n' I  
wish his sperrit j'y;

He spat straight 'n' he steered true, but listen to  
me, say I,

Take 'n' cover 'n' bury him now, 'n' I'll take 'n'  
tell you why.

'It's a rummy rig of a guffy's yarn, 'n' the juice of  
a rummy note,

But if you buries a corp at night, it takes 'n' keeps  
afloat,



For its bloody soul's afraid o' the dark 'n' sticks  
within the throat.

'N' all the night till the grey o' the dawn the dead  
'un has to swim  
With a blue 'n' beastly Will o' the Wisp a-burnin'  
over him,  
With a herring, maybe, a-scoffin' a toe or a shark  
a-chewin' a limb.

'N' all the night the shiverin' corp it has to swim  
the sea,  
With its shudderin' soul inside the throat (where a  
soul's no right to be),  
Till the sky's grey 'n' the dawn's clear, 'n' then  
the sperrit's free.

'Now Joe was a man was right as rain. I'm sort  
of sore for Joe,  
'N' if we bury him durin' the day, his soul can take  
'n' go;  
So we'll dump his corp when the bell strikes 'n' we  
can get below.

'T'd fairly hate for him to swim in a blue 'n' beastly  
light,

With his shudderin' soul inside of him a-feelin' the  
fishes bite,

So over he goes at noon, say I, 'n' he shall sleep  
to-night.'

## BILL

HE lay dead on the cluttered deck and stared at  
the cold skies,  
With never a friend to mourn for him nor a hand  
to close his eyes:  
'Bill, he's dead,' was all they said; 'he's dead, 'n'  
there he lies.'

The mate came forrard at seven bells and spat across  
the rail:  
'Just lash him up wi' some holystone in a clout o'  
rotten sail,  
'N', rot ye, get a gait on ye, ye're slower'n a bloody  
snail!

When the rising moon was a copper disc and the  
sea was a strip of steel,  
We dumped him down to the swaying weeds ten  
fathom beneath the keel.  
'It's rough about Bill,' the fo'c's'le said, 'we'll have  
to stand his wheel.'



## FEVER SHIP

THERE'LL be no weepin' gells ashore when *our* ship  
sails,

Nor no crews cheerin' us, standin' at the rails,

'N' no Blue Peter a-foul the royal stay,

For we've the Yellow Fever—Harry died to-day.—

It's cruel when a fo'c's'le gets the fever!

'N' Dick has got the fever-shakes, 'n' look what I  
was told

(I went to get a sack for him to keep him from the  
cold):

'Sir, can I have a sack?' I says, 'for Dick 'e's fit to  
die.'

'Oh, sack be shot!' the skipper says, 'jest let the  
rotter lie!'—

It's cruel when a fo'c's'le gets the fever!

It's a cruel port is Santos, and a hungry land,  
With rows o' graves already dug in yonder strip of  
sand,

'N' Dick is hollerin' up the hatch, 'e says 'e's goin'  
blue,

His pore teeth are chattering, 'n' what's a man to  
do?—

It's cruel when a fo'c's'le gets the fever!

## FEVER-CHILLS

HE tottered out of the alleyway with cheeks the  
colour of paste,

And shivered a spell and mopped his brow with a  
clout of cotton waste:

'I've a lick of fever-chills,' he said, ' 'n' my inside  
it's green,

But I'd be as right as rain,' he said, 'if I had some  
quinine,—

But there ain't no quinine for us poor sailor-men.

'But them there passengers,' he said, 'if they gets  
fever-chills,

There's brimmin' buckets o' quinine for them, 'n'  
bulgin' crates o' pills,

'N' a doctor with Latin 'n' drugs 'n' all—enough  
to sink a town,

'N' they lies quiet in their blushin' bunks 'n' mops  
their gruel down,—

But their ain't none o' them fine ways for us poor  
sailor-men.

'But the Chief comes forrard 'n' he says, says he,  
"I gives you a straight tip:

Come none o' your Cape Horn fever lays aboard o'  
this yer ship.

On wi' your rags o' duds, my son, 'n' aft, 'n' down  
the hole:

The best cure known for fever-chills is shovelling  
bloody coal."

It's *hard*, my son, that's what it is, for us poor  
sailor-men.'



ONE OF THE BO'SUN'S YARNS

LOAFIN' around in Sailor Town, a-bluin' o' my advance,

I met a derelict donkeyman who led me a merry dance,

Till he landed me 'n' bleached me fair in the bar of a rum-saloon,

'N' there he spun me a juice of a yarn to this-yer brand of tune.

'It's a solemn gospel, mate,' he says, 'but a man as ships aboard

A steamer-tramp, he gets his whack of the wonders of the Lord—

Such as roaches crawlin' over his bunk, 'n' snakes inside his bread,

And work by night and work by day enough to strike him dead.

'But that there's by the way,' says he; 'the yarn  
I'm goin' to spin  
Is about myself 'n' the life I led in the last ship I  
was in,  
The "Esmeralda," casual tramp, from Hull towards  
the Hook,  
Wi' one o' the brand o' Cain for mate 'n' a human  
mistake for cook.

'We'd a week or so of dippin' around in a wind  
from outer hell,  
With a fathom or more of broken sea at large in the  
forrhard well,  
Till our boats were bashed and bust and broke and  
gone to Davy Jones,  
'N' then come white Atlantic fog as chilled us to  
the bones.

'We slowed her down and started the horn and  
watch and watch about,  
We froze the marrow in all our bones a-keepin' a  
good look-out,

'N' the ninth night out, in the middle watch, I  
 woke from a pleasant dream,  
 With the smash of a steamer ramming our plates  
 a point abaft the beam.

' 'Twas cold and dark when I fetched the deck,  
 dirty 'n' cold 'n' thick,  
 'N' there was a feel in the way she rode as fairly  
 turned me sick;—  
 She was settlin', listin' quickly down, 'n' I heard  
 the mates a-cursin',  
 'N' I heard the wash 'n' the grumble-grunt of a  
 steamer's screws reversin'.

'She was leavin' us, mate, to sink or swim, 'n' the  
 words we took 'n' said  
 They turned the port-light grassy-green 'n' the  
 starboard rosy-red.  
 We give her a hot perpetual taste of the singeing  
 curse of Cain,  
 As we heard her back 'n' clear the wreck 'n' off to  
 her course again.

'Then the mate came dancin' on to the scene, 'n' he  
says, "Now quit yer chin,  
Or I'll smash yer skulls, so help me James, 'n' let  
some wisdom in.  
Ye dodderin' scum o' the slums," he says, "are ye  
drunk or blazin' daft?  
If ye wish to save yer sickly hides, ye'd best con-  
trive a raft."

'So he spoke us fair and turned us to, 'n' we  
wrought wi' tooth and nail  
Wi' scantling, casks, 'n' coops 'n' ropes, 'n' boiler-  
plates 'n' sail,  
'N' all the while it were dark 'n' cold 'n' dirty as it  
could be,  
'N' she was soggy 'n' settlin' down to a berth be-  
neath the sea.

'Soggy she grew, 'n' she didn't lift, 'n' she listed  
more 'n' more,  
Till her bell struck 'n' her boiler-pipes began to  
wheeze 'n' snore;



She settled, settled, listed, heeled, 'n' then may I be  
 cust,  
 If her sneezin', wheezin' boiler-pipes did not begin  
 to bust!

'N' then the stars began to shine, 'n' the birds be-  
 gan to sing,  
 'N' the next I knowed I was bandaged up 'n' my  
 arm were in a sling,  
 'N' a swab in uniform were there, 'n' "Well," says  
 he, "'n' how  
 Are yer arms, 'n' legs, 'n' liver, 'n' lungs, 'n' bones  
 a-feelin' now?"

"'Where am I?" says I, 'n' he says, says he, a-cant-  
 in' to the roll,  
 "You're aboard the R.M.S. 'Marie' in the after  
 Glory-Hole,  
 'N' you've had a shave, if you wish to know, from  
 the port o' Kingdom Come.  
 Drink this," he says, 'n' I takes 'n' drinks, 'n' s'elp  
 me, it was rum!

'Seven survivors seen 'n' saved of the "Esmeralda's"  
crowd,  
Taken aboard the sweet "Marie" 'n' bunked 'n'  
treated proud,  
'N' D.B.S.'d to Mersey Docks ('n' a joyful trip we  
made),  
'N' there the skipper were given a purse by a grate-  
ful Board of Trade.

'That's the end o' the yarn,' he says, 'n' he takes  
'n' wipes his lips,  
'Them's the works o' the Lord you sees in steam 'n'  
sailin' ships,—  
Rocks 'n' fogs 'n' shatterin' seas 'n' breakers right  
ahead,  
'N' work o' nights 'n' work o' days enough to strike  
you dead.'

## HELL'S PAVEMENT

'When I'm discharged in Liverpool 'n' draws my bit  
o' pay,

I won't come to sea no more.

I'll court a pretty little lass 'n' have a weddin' day,  
'N' settle somewhere down ashore.

I'll never fare to sea again a-temptin' Davy Jones,  
A-hearkenin' to the cruel sharks a-hungerin' for  
my bones;

I'll run a blushin' dairy-farm or go a-crackin' stones,  
Or buy 'n' keep a little liquor-store,—

So he said.

They towed her in to Liverpool, we made the  
hooker fast,

And the copper-bound officials paid the crew,  
And Billy drew his money, but the money didn't  
last,

For he painted the alongshore blue,—

It was rum for Poll, and rum for Nan, and gin for  
Jolly Jack.

He shipped a week later in the clothes upon his  
back,

He had to pinch a little straw, he had to beg a  
sack

To sleep on, when his watch was through,—  
So he did.



## SEA-CHANGE

'GONEYS an' gullies an' all o' the birds o' the sea,  
They ain't no birds, not really,' said Billy the  
Dane.

'Not mollies, nor gullies, nor goneys at all,' said  
he,  
'But simply the sperrits of mariners livin'  
again.

'Them birds goin' fishin' is nothin' but souls o' the  
drowned,  
Souls o' the drowned an' the kicked as are never  
no more;  
An' that there haughty old albatross cruisin' around,  
Belike he's Admiral Nelson or Admiral Noah.

'An' merry's the life they are living. They settle  
and dip,

They fishes, they never stands watches, they  
waggle their wings;  
When a ship comes by, they fly to look at the ship  
To see how the nowadays mariners manages  
things.

'When freezing aloft in a snorter, I tell you I wish—  
(Though maybe it ain't like a Christian)—I wish  
I could be  
A haughty old copper-bound albatross dipping for  
fish  
And coming the proud over all o' the birds o' the  
sea.'

## HARBOUR-BAR

ALL in the feathered palm-tree tops the bright  
green parrots screech,  
The white line of the running surf goes booming  
down the beach,  
But I shall never see them, though the land lies  
close aboard,  
I've shaped the last long silent tack as takes one  
to the Lord.

Give me the Scripters, Jakey, 'n' my pipe atween  
my lips,  
I'm bound for somewhere south and far beyond the  
track of ships;  
I've run my rags of colours up and clinched them  
to the stay,  
And God the pilot's come aboard to bring me up  
the bay.

You'll mainsail-haul my bits o' things when Christ  
has took my soul,  
'N' you'll lay me quiet somewhere at the landward  
end the Mole,  
Where I shall hear the steamers' sterns a-squatter-  
ing from the heave,  
And the topsail blocks a-piping when a rope-yarn  
fouls the sheave.

Give me a sup of lime-juice; Lord, I'm drifting in  
to port,  
The landfall lies to windward and the wind comes  
light and short,  
And I'm for signing off and out to take my watch  
below,  
And—prop a fellow, Jakey—Lord, it's time for me  
to go!



## THE TURN OF THE TIDE

An' Bill can have my sea-boots, Nigger Jim can  
    have my knife,  
    You can divvy up the dungarees an' bed,  
An' the ship can have my blessing, an' the Lord can  
    have my life,  
    An' sails an' fish my body when I'm dead.

An' dreaming down below there in the tangled  
    greens an' blues,  
    Where the sunlight shudders golden round about,  
I shall hear the ships complainin' an' the cursin' of  
    the crews,  
    An' be sorry when the watch is tumbled out.

I shall hear them hilly-hollying the weather crojick  
    brace,  
    And the sucking of the wash about the hull;

When they chanty up the topsail I'll be hauling in  
my place,  
For my soul will follow seawards like a gull.

I shall hear the blocks a-grunting in the bumpkins  
over-side,  
An' the slatting of the storm-sails on the stay,  
An' the rippling of the catspaw at the making of  
the tide,  
An' the swirl and splash of porpoises at play.

An' Bill can have my sea-boots, Nigger Jim can  
have my knife,  
You can divvy up the whack I haven't scofft,  
An' the ship can have my blessing and the Lord  
can have my life,  
For it's time I quit the deck and went aloft.

## ONE OF WALLY'S YARNS

THE watch was up on the topsail-yard a-making  
fast the sail,

'N' Joe was swiggin' his gasket taut, 'n' I felt the  
stirrup *give*,

'N' he dropped sheer from the tops'l-yard 'n' barely  
cleared the rail,

'N' o' course, we bein' aloft, *we* couldn't do nothin'—  
We couldn't lower a boat and go a-lookin' for him,  
For it blew hard 'n' there was sech a sea runnin'  
That no boat wouldn't live.

I seed him rise in the white o' the wake, I seed  
him lift a hand

('N' him in his oilskin suit 'n' all), I heard him lift  
a cry;

'N' there was his place on the yard 'n' all, 'n' the  
stirrup's busted strand.

'N' the old man said there's a cruel old sea runnin',  
A cold green Barney's Bull of a sea runnin';  
It's hard, but I ain't agoin' to let a boat be lowered:  
So we left him there to die.

He couldn't have kept afloat for long an' him lashed  
up 'n' all,  
'N' we couldn't see him for long, for the sea was  
blurred with the sleet 'n' snow,  
'N' we couldn't think of him much because o' the  
snortin', screamin' squall.  
There was a hand less at the halliards 'n' the braces,  
'N' a name less when the watch spoke to the  
muster-roll,  
'N' a empty bunk 'n' a pannikin as wasn't wanted  
When the watch went below.

## A VALEDICTION (LIVERPOOL DOCKS)

A CRIMP.

A DRUNKEN SAILOR.

*Is there anything as I can do ashore for you  
When you've dropped down the tide?—*

You can take 'n' tell Nan I'm goin' about the  
world agen,

'N' that the world's wide.

'N' tell her that there ain't no postal service

Not down on the blue sea.

'N' tell her that she'd best not keep her fires  
alight

Nor set up late for me.

'N' tell her I'll have forgotten all about her

Afore we cross the Line.

'N' tell her that the dollars of any other sailor-  
man

Is as good red gold as mine.



*Is there anything as I can do aboard for you  
Afore the tow-rope's taut?*

I'm new to this packet and all the ways of her,  
     'N' I don't know of aught;  
 But I knows as I'm goin' down to the seas agen  
     'N' the seas are salt 'n' drear;  
 But I knows as all the doin' as you're man enough  
     for  
     Won't make them lager-beer.

*'N' ain't there nothin' as I can do ashore for you  
When you've got fair afloat?—*

You can buy a farm with the dollars as you've done  
     me of  
 'N' cash my advance-note.

*Is there anythin' you'd fancy for your breakfastin'  
When you're home across Mersey Bar?—*

I wants a red herrin' 'n' a prairie oyster  
 'N' a bucket of Three Star,

'N' a gell with redder lips than Polly has got,  
'N' prettier ways than Nan——

*Well, so-long, Billy, 'n' a spankin' heavy pay-day to  
you!*

So-long, my fancy man!

## A NIGHT AT DAGO TOM'S

OH yesterday, I t'ink it was, while cruisin' down the  
street,  
I met with Bill.—'Hullo,' he says, 'let's give the  
girls a treat.'  
We'd red bandanas round our necks 'n' our shrouds  
new rattled down,  
So we filled a couple of Santy Cruz and cleared for  
Sailor Town.

We scooted south with a press of sail till we fetched  
to a caboose,  
The 'Sailor's Rest,' by Dago Tom, alongside  
'Paddy's Goose.'  
Red curtains to the windies, ay, 'n' white sand to  
the floor,  
And an old blind fiddler liltin' the tune of 'Low-  
lands no more.'

He played the 'Shaking of the Sheets' 'n' the  
 couples did advance,

Bowing, stamping, curtsyng, in the shuffling of  
 the dance;

The old floor rocked and quivered, so it struck be-  
 holders dumb,

'N' arterwards there was sweet songs 'n' good  
 Jamaikey rum.

'N' there was many a merry yarn of many a merry  
 spree

Aboard the ships with royals set a-sailing on the sea,  
 Yarns of the hooker 'Spindrif,' her as had the  
 clipper-bow,—

'There ain't no ships,' says Bill to me, 'like that  
 there hooker now.'

When the old blind fiddler played the tune of  
 'Pipe the Watch Below,'

The skew-eyed landlord dowsed the glim and bade  
 us 'stamp 'n' go,'

'N' we linked it home, did Bill 'n' I, adown the  
 scattered streets,

Until we fetched to Land o' Nod atween the linen  
 sheets.

## 'PORT OF MANY SHIPS

'It's a sunny pleasant anchorage, is Kingdom Come,  
Where crews is always layin' aft for double-tots o'

rum,

'N' there's dancin' 'n' fiddlin' of ev'ry kind o' sort,  
It's a fine place for sailor-men is that there port.

'N' I wish—

I wish as I was there.

'The winds is never nothin' more than jest light  
airs,

'N' no-one gets belayin'-pinned, 'n' no-one never  
swears,

Yer free to loaf an' laze around, yer pipe atween  
yer lips,

Lollin' on the fo'c's'le, sonny, lookin' at the ships.

'N' I wish—

I wish as I was there.



'For ridin' in the anchorage the ships of all the  
world

Have got one anchor down 'n' all sails furled.

All the sunken hookers 'n' the crews as took 'n'  
died

They lays there merry, sonny, swingin' to the  
tide.

'N' I wish—

I wish as I was there.

'Drowned old wooden hookers green wi' drippin'  
wrack,

Ships as never fetched to port, as never came back,

Swingin' to the blushin' tide, dippin' to the swell,

'N' the crews all singin', sonny, beatin' on the bell.

'N' I wish—

I wish as I was there.

## CAPE HORN GOSPEL—I

'I WAS in a hooker once,' said Karlssen,  
'And Bill, as was a seaman, died,  
So we lashed him in an old tarpaulin  
And tumbled him across the side;  
And the fun of it was that all his gear was  
Divided up among the crew  
Before that blushing human error,  
Our crawling little captain, knew.

'On the passage home one morning  
(As certain as I prays for grace)  
There was old Bill's shadder a-hauling  
At the weather mizzen-topsail brace.  
He was all grown green with sea-weed,  
He was all lashed up and shored;  
So I says to him, I says, "Why, Billy!  
What's a-bringin' of you back aboard?"

“I’m a-weary of them there mermaids,”  
Says old Bill’s ghost to me;  
“It ain’t no place for a Christian  
Below there—under sea.  
For it’s all blown sand and shipwrecks,  
And old bones eaten bare,  
And them cold fishy females  
With long green weeds for hair.

“And there ain’t no dances shuffled,  
And no old yarns is spun,  
And there ain’t no stars but starfish,  
And never any moon or sun.  
I heard your keel a-passing  
And the running rattle of the brace,”  
And he says, “Stand by,” says William,  
“For a shift towards a better place.”

‘Well, he sogered about decks till sunrise,  
When a rooster in the hen-coop crowed,  
And as so much smoke he faded  
And as so much smoke he goed;

And I've often wondered since, Jan,  
How his old ghost stands to fare  
Long o' them cold fishy females  
With long green weeds for hair.'

## CAPE HORN GOSPEL—II

JAKE was a dirty Dago lad, an' he gave the skipper  
chin,

An' the skipper up an' took him a crack with an  
iron belaying-pin

Which stiffened him out a rusty corp, as pretty as  
you could wish,

An' then we shovelled him up in a sack an'  
dumped him to the fish.

That was jest arter we'd got sail on her.

Josey slipped from the tops'l-yard an' bust his  
bloody back

(Which comed from playing the giddy goat an'  
leavin' go the jack);

We lashed his chips in clouts of sail an' ballasted  
him with stones,

'The Lord hath taken away,' we says, an' we give  
him to Davy Jones.

An' that was afore we were up with the Line.



Joe were chippin' a rusty plate a-squattin' upon  
the deck,

An' all the watch he had the sun a-singein' him on  
the neck,

An' forrard he falls at last, he does, an' he lets his  
mallet go,

Dead as a nail with a calenture, an' that was the  
end of Joe.

An' that was just afore we made the Plate.

All o' the rest were sailor-men, an' it come to rain  
an' squall,

An' then it was halliards, sheets, an' 'tacks 'clue  
up, an' let go all.'

We snugged her down an' hove her to, an' the old  
contrairy cuss

Started a plate, an' settled an' sank, an' that was  
the end of us.

We slopped around on coops an' planks in the cold  
an' in the dark,

An' Bill were drowned, an' Tom were ate by a  
swine of a cruel shark,

An' a mail-boat reskied Harry an' I (which comed  
of pious prayers),  
Which brings me here a-kickin' my heels in the  
port of Buenos Ayres.

I'm bound for home in the 'Oronook,' in a suit of  
looted duds,  
A D.B.S. a-earnin' a stake by helpin' peelin' spuds,  
An' if ever I fetch to Prince's Stage an' sets my  
feet ashore,  
You bet your hide that there I stay, an' follers the  
sea no more.

## MOTHER CAREY

(AS TOLD ME BY THE BO'SUN)

MOTHER CAREY? She's the mother o' the witches  
'N' all *them* sort o' rips;  
She's a fine gell to look at, but the hitch is,  
She's a sight too fond of ships.  
She lives upon a iceberg to the norred,  
'N' her man he's Davy Jones,  
'N' she combs the weeds upon her forred  
With pore drowned sailors' bones.

She's the mother o' the wrecks, 'n' the mother  
Of all big winds as blows;  
She's up to some deviltry or other  
When it storms, or slets, or snows.  
The noise of the wind's her screamin',  
'I'm arter a plump, young, fine,  
Brass-buttoned, beefy-ribbed young seam'n  
So as me 'n' my mate kin dine.'

She's a hungry old rip 'n' a cruel  
For sailor-men like we,  
She's give a many mariners the gruel  
'N' a long sleep under sea.  
She's the blood o' many a crew upon her  
'N' the bones of many a wreck,  
'N' she's barnacles a-growin' on her  
'N' shark's teeth round her neck.

I ain't never had no schoolin'  
Nor read no books like you,  
But I knows 't ain't healthy to be foolin'  
With that there gristly two.  
You're young, you thinks, 'n' you're lairy,  
But if you're to make old bones,  
Steer clear, I says, o' Mother Carey,  
'N' that there Davy Jones.

## EVENING—REGATTA DAY

YOUR nose is a red jelly, your mouth's a toothless  
wreck,  
And I'm atop of you, banging your head upon the  
dirty deck;  
And both your eyes are bunged and blind like  
those of a mewling pup,  
For you're the juggins who caught the crab and  
lost the ship the Cup.

He caught a crab in the spurt home, this blushing  
cherub did,  
And the 'Craigie's' whaler slipped ahead like a  
cart-wheel on the skid,  
And beat us fair by a boat's nose though we  
sweated fit to start her,  
So we are playing at Nero now, and *he's* the  
Christian martyr.



And Stroke is lashing a bunch of keys to the  
buckle-end a belt,

And we're going to lay you over a chest and baste  
you till you melt.

The 'Craigie' boys are beating the bell and  
cheering down the tier,

† D'ye hear, you Port Mahone baboon, I ask you, do  
you *hear*?

## A VALEDICTION

WE'RE bound for blue water where the great winds  
blow,

It's time to get the tacks aboard, time for us to  
go;

The crowd's at the capstan and the tune's in the  
shout,

'A long pull, a strong pull, *and warp the hooker out.*'

The bow-wash is eddying, spreading from the bows,  
Aloft and loose the topsails and some one give a  
rouse;

A salt Atlantic chanty shall be music to the dead,  
'A long pull, a strong pull, *and the yard to the mast-  
head.*'

Green and merry run the seas, the wind comes  
cold,

Salt and strong and pleasant, and worth a mint of  
gold;

And she's staggering, swooping, as she feels her  
 feet,  
 'A long pull, a strong pull, *and aft the main-sheet.*'

Shrilly squeal the running sheaves, the weather-  
 gear strains,  
 Such a clatter of chain-sheets, the devil's in the  
 chains;  
 Over us the bright stars, under us the drowned,  
 'A long pull, a strong pull, *and we're outward  
 bound.*'

Yonder, round and ruddy, is the mellow old moon,  
 The red-funnelled tug has gone, and now, sonny,  
 soon  
 We'll be clear of the Channel, so watch how you  
 steer,  
 'Ease her when she pitches, *and so-long, my dear.*'

## A PIER-HEAD CHORUS

OH I'll be chewing salted horse and biting flinty  
bread,  
And dancing with the stars to watch, upon the  
fo'c's'le head,  
Hearkening to the bow-wash and the welter of the  
tread  
Of a thousand tons of clipper running free.

For the tug has got the tow-rope and will take us  
to the Downs,  
Her paddles churn the river-wrack to muddy greens  
and browns,  
And I have given river-wrack and all the filth of  
towns  
For the rolling, combing cresters of the sea.

We'll sheet the mizzen-royals home and shimmer  
down the Bay,

The sea-line blue with billows, the land-line blurred  
and grey;

The bow-wash will be piling high and thrashing  
into spray,

As the hooker's fore-foot tramples down the  
swell.

She'll log a giddy seventeen and rattle out the  
reel,

The weight of all the run-out line will be a thing  
to feel,

As the bacca-quidding shell-back shambles aft to  
take the wheel,

And the sea-sick little midgy strikes the bell.



## THE GOLDEN CITY OF ST. MARY

OUT beyond the sunset, could I but find the way,  
Is a sleepy blue laguna which widens to a bay,  
And there's the Blessed City—so the sailors say—  
The Golden City of St. Mary.

It's built of fair marble—white—without a stain,  
And in the cool twilight when the sea-winds  
wane  
The bells chime faintly, like a soft, warm rain,  
In the Golden City of St. Mary.

Among the green palm-trees where the fire-flies  
shine,  
Are the white tavern tables where the gallants  
dine,  
Singing slow Spanish songs like old mulled wine,  
In the Golden City of St. Mary.

Oh I'll be shipping sunset-wards and westward-ho  
Through the green toppling combers a-shattering  
    into snow,  
Till I come to quiet moorings and a watch below,  
    In the Golden City of St. Mary.

## TRADE WINDS

IN the harbour, in the island, in the Spanish Seas,  
Are the tiny white houses and the orange-trees,  
And day-long, night long, the cool and pleasant  
breeze

Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

There is the red wine, the nutty Spanish ale,  
The shuffle of the dancers, the old salt's tale,  
The squeaking fiddle, and the souging in the sail  
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

And o' nights there's fire-flies and the yellow moon,  
And in the ghostly palm-trees the sleepy tune  
Of the quiet voice calling me, the long low croon  
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

## SEA-FEVER

I MUST down to the seas again, to the lonely sea  
and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her  
by,  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the  
white sail's shaking,  
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn  
breaking.

I must down to the seas again, for the call of the  
running tide  
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be  
denied;  
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds  
flying,  
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the  
sea-gulls crying.

I must down to the seas again to the vagrant gypsy  
life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the  
wind's like a whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing  
fellow-rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long  
trick's over.



A WANDERER'S SONG

A WIND'S in the heart of me, a fire's in my heels,  
I am tired of brick and stone and rumbling wagon-  
wheels;

I hunger for the sea's edge, the limits of the land,  
Where the wild old Atlantic is shouting on the  
sand.

Oh I'll be going, leaving the noises of the street,  
To where a lifting foresail-foot is yanking at the  
sheet;

To a windy, tossing anchorage where yawls and  
ketches ride,

Oh I'll be going, going, until I meet the tide.

And first I'll hear the sea-wind, the mewing of the  
gulls,

The clucking, sucking of the sea about the rusty  
hulls,

The songs at the capstan in the hooker warping  
out,  
And then the heart of me'll know I'm there or  
thereabout.

Oh I am tired of brick and stone, the heart of me  
is sick,  
For windy green, unquiet sea, the realm of Moby  
Dick;  
And I'll be going, going, from the roaring of the  
wheels,  
For a wind's in the heart of me, a fire's in my  
heels.

## CARDIGAN BAY

CLEAN, green, windy billows notching out the sky,  
Grey clouds tattered into rags, sea-winds blowing  
    high,  
And the ships under topsails, beating, thrashing by,  
    And the mewing of the herring gulls.

Dancing, flashing green seas shaking white locks,  
Boiling in blind eddies over hidden rocks,  
And the wind in the rigging, the creaking of the  
    blocks,  
    And the straining of the timber hulls.

Delicate, cool sea-weeds, green and amber-brown,  
In beds where shaken sunlight slowly filters down  
On many a drowned seventy-four, many a sunken  
    town,  
    And the whitening of the dead men's skulls.

## CHRISTMAS EVE AT SEA

A WIND is rustling 'south and soft,'  
Cooing a quiet country tune,  
The calm sea sighs, and far aloft  
The sails are ghostly in the moon.

Unquiet ripples lisp and purr,  
A block there pipes and chirps i' the sheave,  
The wheel-ropes jar, the reef-points stir  
Faintly—and it is Christmas Eve.

The hushed sea seems to hold her breath,  
And o'er the giddy, swaying spars,  
Silent and excellent as Death,  
The dim blue skies are bright with stars.

Dear God—they shone in Palestine  
Like this, and yon pale moon serene  
Looked down among the lowing kine  
On Mary and the Nazarene.

The angels called from deep to deep,  
 The burning heavens felt the thrill,  
 Startling the flocks of silly sheep  
 And lonely shepherds on the hill.

To-night beneath the dripping bows  
 Where flashing bubbles burst and throng,  
 The bow-wash murmurs and sighs and soughs  
 A message from the angels' song.

The moon goes nodding down the west,  
 The drowsy helmsman strikes the bell;  
*Rex Judæorum natus est,*  
 I charge you, brothers, sing *Nowell,*  
*Nowell,*  
*Rex Judæorum natus est.*

## A BALLAD OF CAPE ST. VINCENT

Now, Bill, ain't it prime to be a-sailin',  
Slippin' easy, splashin' up the sea,  
Dossin' snug aneath the weather-railin',  
Quiddin' bonded Jacky out a-lee?  
English sea astern us and afore us,  
Reaching out three thousand miles ahead,  
God's own stars a-risin' solemn o'er us,  
And—yonder's Cape St. Vincent and the  
Dead.

There they lie, Bill, man and mate together,  
Dreamin' out the dog-watch down below,  
Anchored in the Port of Pleasant Weather,  
Waiting for the Bo'sun's call to blow.  
Over them the tide goes lappin', swayin',  
Under them's the wide bay's muddy bed,  
And it's pleasant dreams—to them—to hear us  
sayin',  
Yonder's Cape St. Vincent and the Dead.



Hear that P. and O. boat's engines dronin',  
Beating out of time and out of tune,  
Ripping past with every plate a-groanin',  
Spitting smoke and cinders at the moon?  
Ports a-lit like little stars a-settin',  
See 'em glintin' yaller, green, and red,  
Loggin' twenty knots, Bill,—but forgettin',  
Yonder's Cape St. Vincent and the Dead.

They're 'discharged' now, Billy, 'left the  
service,'  
Rough an' bitter was the watch they stood,  
Drake an' Blake, an' Collingwood an' Jervis,  
Nelson, Rodney, Hawke, an' Howe an' Hood.  
They'd a hard time, haulin' an' directin',  
There's the flag they left us, Billy—tread  
Straight an' keep it flyin'—recollectin',  
Yonder's Cape St. Vincent and the Dead.

## THE TARRY BUCCANEER

I'M going to be a pirate with a bright brass pivot-  
gun,  
And an island in the Spanish Main beyond the  
setting sun,  
And a silver flagon full of red wine to drink when  
work is done,  
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry  
Buccaneer.

With a sandy creek to careen in, and a pig-tailed  
Spanish mate,  
And under my main-hatches a sparkling merry  
freight  
Of doubloons and double moidores and pieces of  
eight,  
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry  
Buccaneer.

With a taste for Spanish wine-shops and for spend-  
ing my doubloons,  
And a crew of swart mulattoes and black-eyed  
octoroons,  
And a thoughtful way with mutineers of making  
them maroons,  
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry  
Buccaneer.

With a sash of crimson velvet and a diamond-hilted  
sword,  
And a silver whistle about my neck secured to a  
golden cord,  
And a habit of taking captives and walking them  
along a board,  
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry  
Buccaneer.

With a spy-glass tucked beneath my arm and a  
cocked hat cocked askew,  
And a long low rakish schooner a-cutting of the  
waves in two,

And a flag of skull and cross-bones the wickedest  
that ever flew,

Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry  
Buccaneer.

## A BALLAD OF JOHN SILVER

WE were schooner-rigged and rakish, with a long  
and lissome hull,  
And we flew the pretty colours of the cross-bones  
and the skull;  
We'd a big black Jolly Roger flapping grimly at  
the fore,  
And we sailed the Spanish Water in the happy days  
of yore.

We'd a long brass gun amidships, like a well-  
conducted ship,  
We had each a brace of pistols and a cutlass at the  
hip;  
It's a point which tells against us, and a fact to be  
deplored,  
But we chased the goodly merchant-men and laid  
their ships aboard.

Then the dead men fouled the scuppers and the  
wounded filled the chains,  
And the paint-work all was spatter-dashed with  
other people's brains,  
She was boarded, she was looted, she was scuttled  
till she sank,  
And the pale survivors left us by the medium of  
the plank.

O! then it was (while standing by the taffrail on  
the poop)  
We could hear the drowning folk lament the absent  
chicken-coop;  
Then, having washed the blood away, we'd little  
else to do  
Than to dance a quiet hornpipe as the old salts  
taught us to.

O! the fiddle on the fo'c's'le, and the slapping  
naked soles,  
And the genial 'Down the middle, Jake, and  
curtsey when she rolls!'



With the silver seas around us and the pale moon  
overhead,  
And the look-out not a-looking and his pipe-bowl  
glowing red.

Ah! the pig-tailed, quidding pirates and the pretty  
pranks we played,  
All have since been put a stop-to by the naughty  
Board of Trade;  
The schooners and the merry crews are laid away  
to rest,  
A little south the sunset in the Islands of the  
Blest.

## LYRICS FROM 'THE BUCCANEER'

## I

WE are far from sight of the harbour lights,  
Of the sea-ports whence we came,  
But the old sea calls and the cold wind bites,  
And our hearts are turned to flame.

And merry and rich is the goodly gear  
We'll win upon the tossing sea,  
A silken gown for my dainty dear,  
And a gold doubloon for me.

It's the old old road and the old old quest  
Of the cut-throat sons of Cain,  
South by west and a quarter west,  
And hey for the Spanish Main,

ii

THERE'S a sea-way somewhere where all day long  
Is the hushed susurrus of the sea,  
The mewling of the skuas, and the sailor's song,  
And the wind's cry calling me.

There's a haven somewhere where the quiet of the  
bay  
Is troubled with the shifting tide,  
Where the gulls are flying, crying in the bright  
white spray,  
And the tan-sailed schooners ride.

## III

THE toppling rollers at the harbour mouth  
Are spattering the bows with foam,  
And the anchor's catted, and she's heading for the  
south  
With her topsails sheeted home.

And a merry measure is the dance she'll tread  
(To the clanking of the staysail's hanks)  
When the guns are growling and the blood runs  
red,  
And the prisoners are walking of the planks.

## D'AVALOS' PRAYER

WHEN the last sea is sailed and the last shallow  
charted,  
When the last field is reaped and the last harvest  
stored,  
When the last fire is out and the last guest departed,  
Grant the last prayer that I shall pray, Be good  
to me, O Lord!

And let me pass in a night at sea, a night of storm  
and thunder,  
In the loud crying of the wind through sail and  
rope and spar;  
Send me a ninth great peaceful wave to drown and  
roll me under  
To the cold tunny-fishes' home where the drowned  
galleons are.

And in the dim green quiet place far out of sight  
and hearing,

Grant I may hear at whiles the wash and thresh  
of the sea-foam

About the fine keen bows of the stately clippers  
steering

Towards the lone northern star and the fair ports  
of home.



## THE WEST WIND

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds'  
cries;

I never hear the west wind but tears are in my  
eyes.

For it comes from the west lands, the old brown  
hills,

And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired as  
mine,

Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like  
wine.

There is cool green grass there, where men may lie  
at rest,

And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the  
nest.

'Will ye not come home, brother? ye have been  
long away,

It's April, and blossom time, and white is the may;  
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is the  
rain,—

Will ye not come home, brother, home to us again?

'The young corn is green, brother, where the  
rabbits run,

It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain and  
sun.

It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's  
brain,

To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring  
again.

'Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the  
green wheat,

So will ye not come home, brother, and rest your  
tired feet?

I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for  
aching eyes,'

Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds'  
cries.

It's the white road westwards is the road I must  
tread

To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest for  
heart and head,

To the violets and the warm hearts and the thrushes'  
song,

In the fine land, the west land, the land where I  
belong.

## THE GALLEY-ROWERS

STAGGERING over the running combers  
The long-ship heaves her dripping flanks,  
Singing together, the sea-roamers  
Drive the oars grunting in the banks.  
A long pull,  
And a long long pull to Mydath.

'Where are ye bound, ye swart sea-farers,  
Vexing the grey wind-angered brine,  
Bearers of home-spun cloth, and bearers  
Of goat-skins filled with country wine?'

'We are bound sunset-wards, not knowing,  
Over the whale's way miles and miles,  
Going to Vine-Land, haply going  
To the Bright Beach of the Blessed Isles.

'In the wind's teeth and the spray's stinging  
Westward and outward forth we go,  
Knowing not whither nor why, but singing  
An old old oar-song as we row.  
A long pull,  
And a long long pull to Mydath.'

## SORROW OF MYDATH

WEARY the cry of the wind is, weary the sea,  
Weary the heart and the mind and the body of me.  
Would I were out of it, done with it, would I  
could be  
A white gull crying along the desolate sands!

Outcast, derelict soul in a body accurst,  
Standing drenched with the spindrift, standing  
athirst,  
For the cool green waves of death to arise and  
burst  
In a tide of quiet for me on the desolate sands.

Would that the waves and the long white hair of the  
spray  
Would gather in splendid terror and blot me away  
To the sunless place of the wrecks where the waters  
sway  
Gently, dreamily, quietly over desolate sands!



## VAGABOND

DUNNO a heap about the what an' why,  
Can't say's I ever knowed.  
Heaven to me's a fair blue stretch of sky,  
Earth's jest a dusty road.

Dunno the names o' things, nor what they are,  
Can't say's I ever will.  
Dunno about God—he's jest the noddin' star  
Atop the windy hill.

Dunno about Life—it's jest a tramp alone  
From wakin'-time to doss.  
Dunno about Death—it's jest a quiet stone  
All over-grey wi' moss.

An' why I live, an' why the old world spins,  
Are things I never knowed;  
My mark's the gypsy fires, the lonely inns,  
An' jest the dusty road.

## VISION

I HAVE drunken the red wine and flung the dice;  
Yet once in the noisy ale-house I have seen and  
heard  
The dear pale lady with the mournful eyes,  
And a voice like that of a pure grey cooing  
bird.

With delicate white hands—white hands that I  
have kist  
(Oh frail white hands!)—she soothed my aching  
eyes;  
And her hair fell about her in a dim clinging  
mist,  
Like smoke from a golden incense burned in  
Paradise.

With gentle loving words, like shredded balm and  
myrrh,

She healed with sweet forgiveness my black  
bitter sins,

Then passed into the night, and I go seeking her  
Down the dark, silent streets, past the warm,  
lighted inns.

## SPUNYARN

SPUNYARN, spunyarn, with one to turn the crank,  
And one to slather the spunyarn, and one to knot  
the hank;  
It's an easy job for a summer watch, and a pleasant  
job enough,  
To twist the tarry lengths of yarn to shapely sailor  
stuff.

Life is nothing but spunyarn on a winch in need of  
oil,  
Little enough is twined and spun but fever-fret  
and moil.  
I have travelled on land and sea, and all that I  
have found  
Are these poor songs to brace the arms that help  
the winches round.

## THE DEAD KNIGHT

THE cleanly rush of the mountain air,  
And the mumbling, grumbling humble-bees,  
Are the only things that wander there,  
The pitiful bones are laid at ease,  
The grass has grown in his tangled hair,  
And a rambling bramble binds his knees.

To shrieve his soul from the pangs of hell,  
The only requiem-bells that rang  
Were the hare-bell and the heather-bell.  
Hushed he is with the holy spell  
In the gentle hymn the wind sang,  
And he lies quiet, and sleeps well.

He is bleached and blanched with the summer  
sun;  
The misty rain and the cold dew

Have altered him from the kingly one  
(That his lady loved, and his men knew)  
And dwindled him to a skeleton.

The vetches have twined about his bones,  
The straggling ivy twists and creeps  
In his eye-sockets; the nettle keeps  
Vigil about him while he sleeps.  
Over his body the wind moans  
With a dreary tune throughout the day,  
In a chorus wistful, eerie, thin  
As the gull's cry—as the cry in the bay,  
The mournful word the seas say  
When tides are wandering out or in.



## PERSONAL

TRAMPING at night in the cold and wet, I passed  
the lighted inn,

And an old tune, a sweet tune, was being played  
within.

It was full of the laugh of the leaves and the song  
the wind sings;

It brought the tears and the choked throat, and a  
catch to the heart-strings.

And it brought a bitter thought of the days that  
now were dead to me,

The merry days in the old home before I went to  
sea—

Days that were dead to me indeed. I bowed my  
head to the rain,

And I passed by the lighted inn to the lonely roads  
again.

## ON MALVERN HILL

A WIND is brushing down the clover,  
It sweeps the tossing branches bare,  
Blowing the poising kestrel over  
The crumbling ramparts of the Caer.

It whirls the scattered leaves before us  
Along the dusty road to home,  
Once it awakened into chorus  
The heart-strings in the ranks of Rome.

There by the gusty coppice border  
The shrilling trumpets broke the halt,  
The Roman line, the Roman order,  
Swayed forwards to the blind assault.

Spearman and charioteer and bowman  
Charged and were scattered into spray,  
Savage and taciturn the Roman  
Hewed upwards in the Roman way.

There—in the twilight—where the cattle  
Are lowing home across the fields,  
The beaten warriors left the battle  
Dead on the clansmen's wicker shields.

The leaves whirl in the wind's riot  
Beneath the Beacon's jutting spur,  
Quiet are clan and chief, and quiet  
Centurion and signifer.

## TEWKESBURY ROAD

It is good to be out on the road, and going one  
knows not where,

Going through meadow and village, one knows  
not whither nor why;

Through the grey light drift of the dust, in the  
keen cool rush of the air,

Under the flying white clouds, and the broad  
blue lift of the sky;

And to halt at the chattering brook, in the tall  
green fern at the brink

Where the harebell grows, and the gorse, and  
the fox-gloves purple and white;

Where the shy-eyed delicate deer troop down to  
the pools to drink,

When the stars are mellow and large at the  
coming on of the night.

O! to feel the warmth of the rain, and the homely  
smell of the earth,  
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, a joy past  
power of words;  
And the blessed green comely meadows seem all  
a-ripple with mirth  
At the lilt of the shifting feet, and the dear  
wild cry of the birds.

## ON EASTNOR KNOLL

SILENT are the woods, and the dim green boughs are  
Hushed in the twilight: yonder, in the path through  
The apple orchard, is a tired plough-boy  
Calling the cows home.

A bright white star blinks, the pale moon rounds, but  
Still the red, lurid wreckage of the sunset  
Smoulders in smoky fire, and burns on  
The misty hill-tops.

Ghostly it grows, and darker, the burning  
Fades into smoke, and now the gusty oaks are  
A silent army of phantoms thronging  
A land of shadows.



'REST HER SOUL, SHE'S DEAD'

SHE has done with the sea's sorrow and the  
world's way

And the wind's grief;

Strew her with laurel, cover her with bay

And ivy-leaf.

Let the slow mournful music sound before her,

Strew the white flowers about the bier, and  
o'er her

The sleepy poppies red beyond belief.

On the black velvet covering her eyes

Let the dull earth be thrown;

Hers is the mightier silence of the skies,

And long, quiet rest alone.

Over the pure, dark, wistful eyes of her,

O'er all the human, all that dies of her,

Gently let flowers be strown.

Lay her away in quiet old peaceful earth  
    (This blossom of ours),  
She has done with the world's anger and the  
    world's mirth,  
    Sunshine and rain-showers;  
And over the poor, sad, tired face of her,  
In the long grass above the place of her  
(The grass which hides the glory and the grace  
    of her),  
    May the Spring bring the flowers.

'ALL YE THAT PASS BY'

ON the long dusty ribbon of the long city street,  
The pageant of life is passing me on multitudinous  
feet,

With a word here of the hills, and a song there of  
the sea,

And—the great movement changes—the pageant  
passes me.

Faces—passionate faces—of men I may not know,  
They haunt me, burn me to the heart, as I turn  
aside to go:

The king's face and the cur's face, and the face of  
the stuffed swine,

They are passing, they are passing, their eyes look  
into mine.

I never can tire of the music of the noise of many  
feet,  
The thrill of the blood pulsing, the tick of the  
heart's beat,  
Of the men many as sands, of the squadrons ranked  
and massed  
Who are passing, changing always, and never have  
changed or passed.

## IN MEMORY OF A. P. R.

ONCE in the windy wintry weather,  
The road dust blowing in our eyes,  
We starved or tramped or slept together  
Beneath the haystacks and the skies;

Until the tiring tramp was over,  
And then the call for him was blown,  
He left his friend—his fellow-rover—  
To tramp the dusty roads alone.

The winds wail and the woods are yellow,  
The hills are blotted in the rain,  
'And would he were with me,' sighs his fellow,  
'With me upon the roads again!'

## TO-MORROW,

OH yesterday the cutting edge drank thirstily and  
deep,  
The upland outlaws ringed us in and herded us as  
sheep,  
They drove us from the stricken field and bayed us  
into keep;  
    But to-morrow  
By the living God, we'll try the game again!

Oh yesterday our little troop was ridden through  
and through,  
Our swaying, tattered pennons fled, a broken, beaten  
few,  
And all a summer afternoon they hunted us and  
slew;  
    But to-morrow,  
By the living God, we'll try the game again!



And here upon the turret-top the bale-fire glowers  
red,

The wake-lights burn and drip about our hacked,  
disfigured dead,

And many a broken heart is here and many a  
broken head;

But to-morrow,

By the living God, we'll try the game again!

## CAVALIER

ALL the merry kettle-drums are thudding into  
rhyme,

Dust is swimming dizzily down the village street,  
The scabbards are clattering, the feathers nodding  
time,

To a clink of many horses' shoes, a tramp of many  
feet.

Seven score of Cavaliers fighting for the King,

Trolling lusty stirrup-songs, clamouring for wine,  
Riding with a loose rein, marching with a swing,  
Beneath the blue bannerol of Rupert of the  
Rhine.

Hey the merry company;—the loud fifes playing—  
Blue scarves and bright steel and blossom of the  
may,

Roses in the feathered hats, the long plumes  
swaying,

A king's son ahead of them showing them the  
way.

## A SONG AT PARTING

THE tick of the blood is settling slow, my heart will  
soon be still,  
And ripe and ready am I for rest in the grave atop  
the hill;  
So gather me up and lay me down, for ready and  
ripe am I,  
For the weary vigil with sightless eyes that may  
not see the sky.

I have lived my life: I have spilt the wine that  
God the Maker gave,  
So carry me up the lonely hill and lay me in the  
grave,  
And cover me in with cleanly mould and old and  
lichened stones,  
In a place where ever the cry of the wind shall  
thrill my sleepy bones.

Gather me up and lay me down with an old song  
and a prayer,

Cover me in with wholesome earth, and weep and  
leave me there;

And get you gone with a kindly thought and an  
old tune and a sigh,

And leave me alone, asleep, at rest, for ready and  
ripe am I.





## GLOSSARY

*Abaft the beam.*—That half of a ship included between her amidship section and the taffrail. (For 'taffrail,' see below.)

*Abel Brown.*—An unquotable sea-song.

*Advance-note.*—A note for one month's wages issued to sailors on their signing a ship's articles.

*Belaying-pins.*—Bars of iron or hard wood to which running rigging may be secured or *belayed*.

Belaying-pins, from their handiness and peculiar club-shape, are sometimes used as bludgeons.

*Bloody.*—An intensive derived from the substantive 'blood,' a name applied to the Bucks, Scowrers, and Mohocks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

*Blue Peter.*—A blue and white flag hoisted at the fore-trucks of ships about to sail.

*Bollard.*—From *bōl* or *bole*, the round trunk of a tree. A phallic or 'sparklet'-shaped ornament of the dock-side, of assistance to mariners in warping into or out of dock.

*Bonded Jacky.*—Negro-head tobacco or sweet cake.

*Bull of Barney.*—A beast mentioned in an unquotable sea-proverb.

*Bumpkin.*—An iron bar (projecting out-board from the ship's side) to which the lower and topsail brace blocks are sometimes hooked.

- Cape Horn fever.*—The illness proper to malingersers.
- Catted.*—Said of an anchor when weighed and secured to the 'cat-head.'
- Chanty.*—A song sung to lighten labour at the capstan sheets, and halliards. The soloist is known as the chanty-man, and is usually a person of some authority in the fo'c's'le. Many chanties are of great beauty and extreme antiquity.
- Clipper-bow.*—A bow of delicate curves and lines.
- Clout.*—A rag or cloth. Also a blow:—'I fetched him a clout i' the lug.'
- Crimp.*—A sort of scoundrelly land-shark preying upon sailors.

- D.B.S.*—Distressed British Sailor. A term applied to those who are invalided home from foreign ports.
- Dungaree.*—A cheap, rough thin cloth (generally blue or brown), woven, I am told, of coco-nut fibre.

- Forward or Forrard.*—Towards the bows.
- Fo'c's'le (Forecastle).*—The deck-house or living-room of the crew. The word is often used to indicate the crew, or those members of it described by passengers as the 'common sailors.'
- Fore-stay.*—A powerful wire rope supporting the foremast forward.

- Gaskets.*—Ropes or plaited lines used to secure the sails in furling.
- Goneys.*—Albatrosses.
- Guffy.*—A marine or jolly.
- Gullies.*—Sea-gulls, Cape Horn pigeons, etc.

*Heave and haul.*—A cry of encouragement at the capstan.

*Hooker.*—A periphrasis for ship, I suppose from a ship's carrying *hooks* or anchors.

*Jack or Jackstay.*—A slender iron rail running along the upper portions of the yards in some ships.

*Leeward.*—Pronounced 'looard.' That quarter to which the wind blows.

*Mainsail haul.*—An order in tacking ship bidding 'swing the mainyards.' To loot, steal, or 'acquire.'

*Main-shrouds.*—Ropes, usually wire, supporting lateral strains upon the mainmast.

*Mollies.*—Molly-hawks, or Fulmar petrels. Wide-winged dusky sea-fowls, common in high latitudes, oily to taste, gluttonous. Great fishers and garbage-eaters.

*Port Mahon Baboon, or Port Mahon Soger.*—I have been unable to discover either the origin of these insulting epithets or the reasons for the peculiar bitterness with which they sting the marine recipient. They are older than Dana (*circa* 1840).

An old merchant sailor, now dead, once told me that Port Mahon was that godless city from which the Ark set sail, in which case the name may have some traditional connection with that evil 'Mahoun' or 'Mahu,' prince of darkness, mentioned by Shakespeare and some of our older poets.

The real Port Mahon, a fine harbour in Minorca,

was taken by the French, from Admiral Byng, in the year 1756.

I think that the phrases originated at the time of Byng's consequent trial and execution.

*Purchase.*—See 'Tackle.'

*Quidding.*—Tobacco-chewing.

*Sails.*—The sail-maker.

*Santa Cruz.*—A brand of rum.

*Scanlling.*—Planks.

*Soger.*—A laggard, malingerer, or hang-back. To loaf or skulk or work Tom Cox's Traverse.

*Spunyarn.*—A three-strand line spun out of old rope-yarns knotted together. Most sailing-ships carry a spunyarn winch, and the spinning of such yarn is a favourite occupation in fine weather.

*Stirrup.*—A short rope supporting the foot-rope on which the sailors stand when aloft on the yards.

*Tack.*—To stay or 'bout ship. A reach to windward. The weather lower corner of a course.

*Tackle.*—Pronounced *taykle*. A combination of pulleys for obtaining of artificial power.

*Taffrail.*—The rail or bulwark round the sternmost end of a ship's poop or after-deck.

*Trick.*—The ordinary two-hour spell at the wheel or on the look-out.

*Windward* or *Weather.*—That quarter from which the wind blows.

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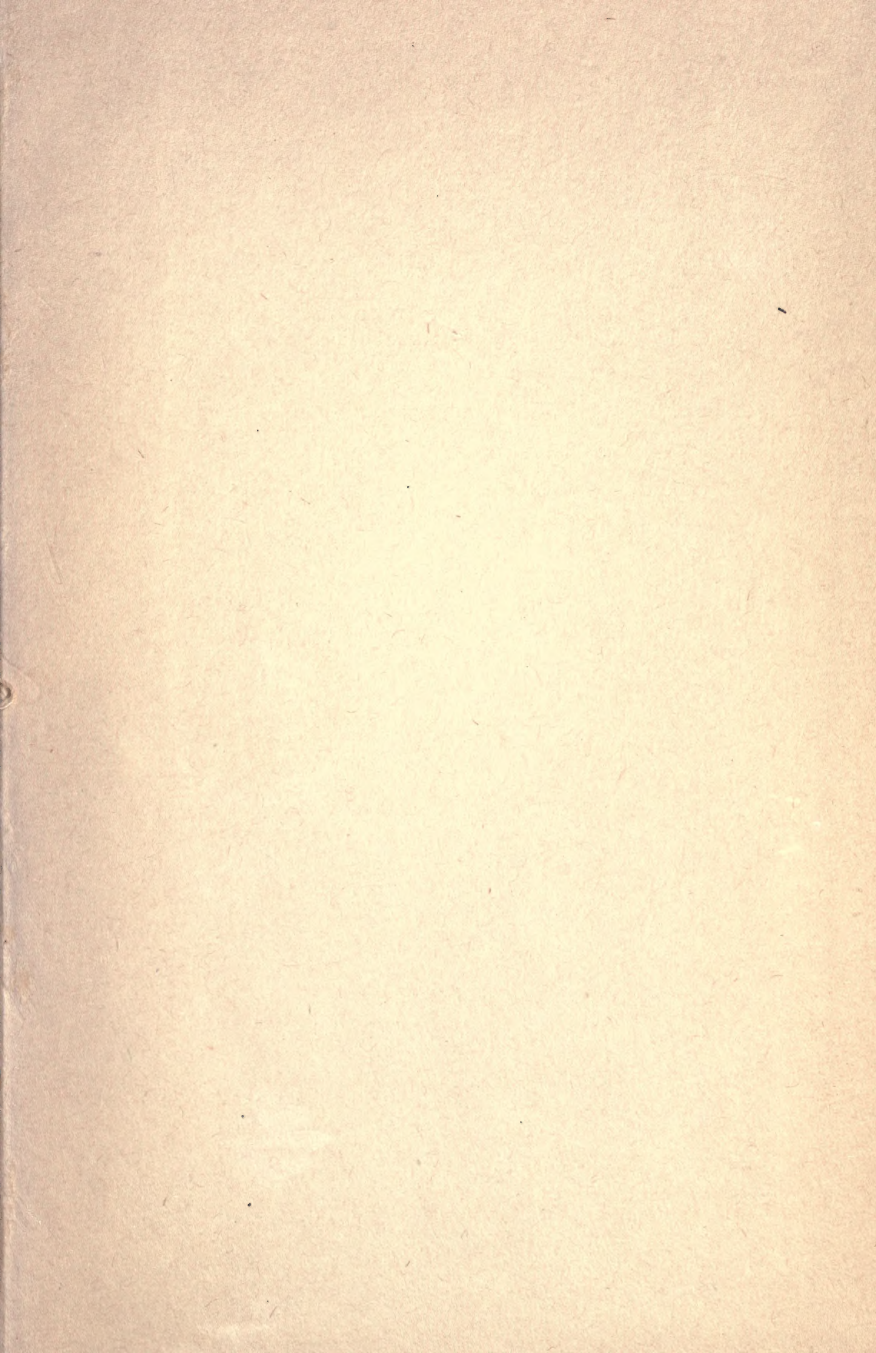
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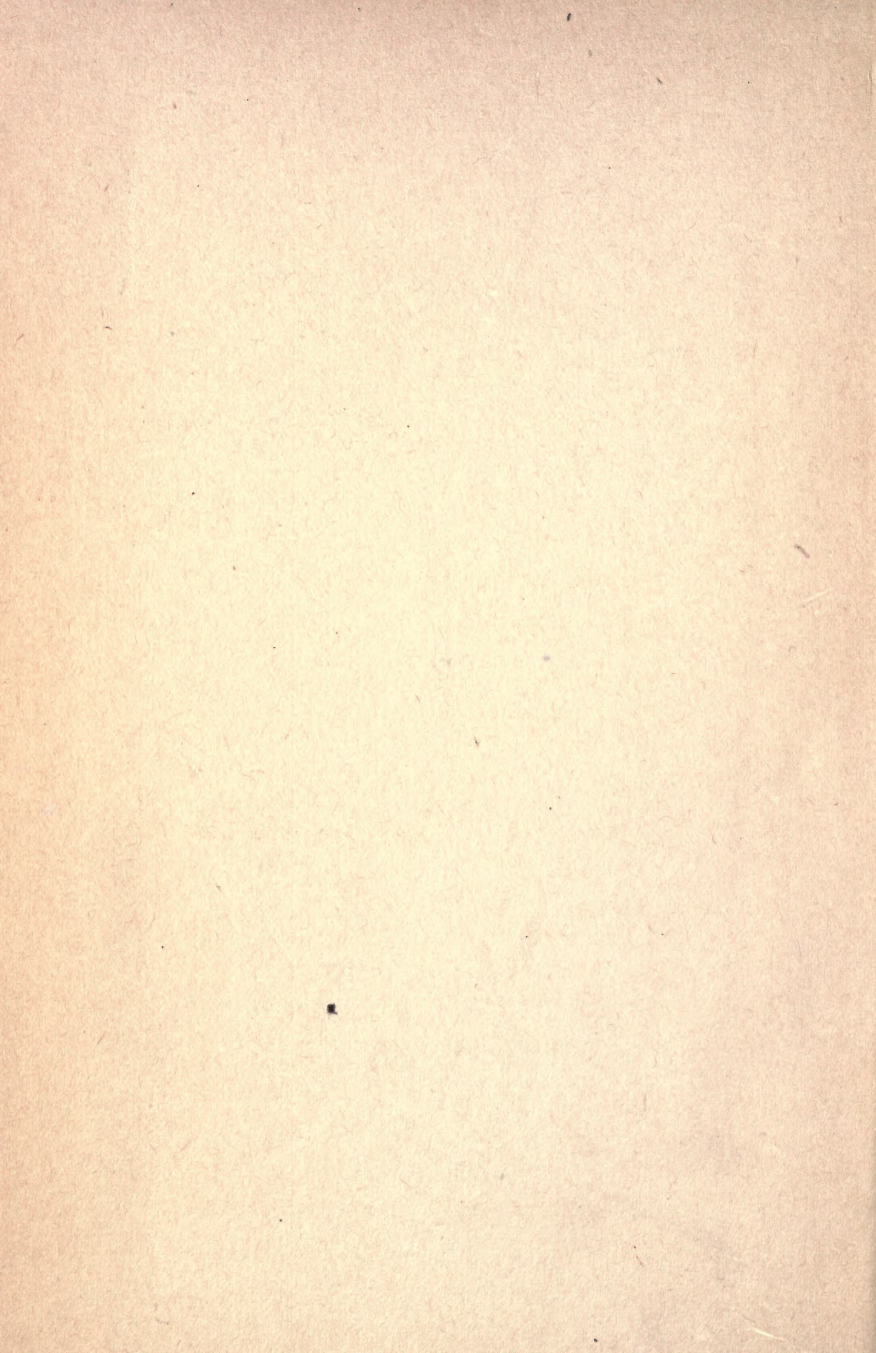














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